

CHANDLER'S FORD AREA APPROACH TO SMARTPHONE USE IN SCHOOLS

As a cluster of schools we have been concerned about the impact of smartphone use for children and young people. We are concerned about the impact of smart phone use on young people's emotional and physical wellbeing as well as their mental health. On their ability to stay safe as well as the impact on their ability to communicate effectively with adults and peers.

There have been a huge number of studies, research and evidence reviews. For example, this [House of Commons Committee](#) report from May 2024 was recently put to the government with recommendations. Some of the statistics are shocking;

- 79% of young people encounter violent pornography before the age of 18 with the average age that they first see pornography is 13 years old
- 81% of girls aged 7 - 21 have experienced threatening or upsetting behaviour online
- Sexual crimes committed against children online have risen 300% since 2013

Smartphone use can distract learning with it taking up to 20 minutes to refocus on learning after receiving a notification or similar and more than 2 hours a day of recreational screen time can worsen working memory, processing speed, attention levels and executive function.

The report, however, is also balanced in terms of highlighting the positive aspects of being online such as LGBTQ+ children and young people being able to reach out to a wider community and some gains in terms of online learning in mathematics in particular.

As a group we want to support our children and young people to learn but we also must keep them safe and want them to thrive and be happy. We have decided to have a common approach across the area in order to achieve this. We are also fully aware that schools should not be tasked with solving all of society's ills - we recognise that this is an issue that reaches well beyond the school gates so we want to support parents and carers as well as recognise that they are ultimately responsible for their children's upbringing.

All of our schools have policies that mean that phones are not allowed to be used within school. The logistics of this differs depending on the school but we all agree that, on balance, this is the right approach. Parents should never feel that a smartphone is an essential item for a young person to have and it is certainly not an essential part of school equipment. This may mean that parents decide to purchase a 'brick phone' that can make calls and send text messages, they may decide not to purchase a phone at all or they may decide to provide a smartphone with parental controls and restrictions. We would strongly advise parents to not allow children and young people unfettered access to the internet via their smartphone. We would recommend that parents do make an informed choice and we will support this by offering information events - more details to follow.

We hope that, by coming together, we can support parents and the wider community to tackle this issue for the good of all of our children whilst still maintaining healthy boundaries between the school and home.

